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# Does Your GPA Really Matter?

**Question:** *Are employers looking for college graduates with high grade point averages, and is a high grade point average a determining factor in the starting salary that the graduate can expect to receive?*

## First Answer:

I can answer authoritatively only for graduates of professional graduate schools, but I think the answer holds true across the spectrum. A high grade point average is a factor in an employer's assessment of the desirability of a recent graduate candidate whose worth is not yet proven in the workforce. I have seen employers use GPAs in weighted-average models of assessing students, but to rank their desirability more than to impact starting salaries. In other words, your GPA may screen you in or out as a candidate, so it may affect whether or not you get an offer from a particular employer.



Once an employer decides to make you an offer, however, my experience is that they make that offer based on your overall qualifications for the job within the range they have set as "market worth." If in their overall assessment, you minimally meet their qualifications, they'll offer the bottom of the range; if you are a perfect match, they'll offer the middle; if you exceed their qualifications (a 4.0 GPA where they hadn't predetermined to hire only the top 3 percent of the class, more experience, higher degree, a foreign language where one is a plus but not required, for example), they may offer the top of the range and you may be able to negotiate above the range. That's happened to my students

who were coached to sell their ability to "hit the ground running" and outperform their competitors, faster after hire.

So it's the whole package you present as being the best "fit" for the job, not just a great GPA, which determines job and salary offers.

— Carol Anderson, Career Development and Placement Office, Robert J. Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy at New School University in New York City

## Second Answer:

The answer to this question depends on your industry. If you are an entry-level job seeker, some fields need a kind of precision and expertise that can only be measured through

your grades. Other jobs require more social skills or a visual portfolio. I have worked with employers who would not consider anyone without a 3.0 GPA. Others will go as low as a 2.5 GPA. But if you are considering graduate school, you better keep it above a 3.5 GPA for most any major.

For the most part, employers are looking for a whole person—not just a grade point average. Do not weigh any one part of your résumé/credentials more than another. Choose your part-time jobs and extracurricular activities wisely. If at all possible, get involved in the professional organizations related to your major. Immerse yourself in the current trends of your field, and meet these people as a student—before you need a job. That way, you have connections when you graduate.

When I work as a consultant, I always want to know the grades. But it counts for about 25 percent of my overall opinion of the candidate. If you cannot pass your

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classes with B's, it makes me wonder how much you value your education. Your grades show that you can commit to something and see it through.

— Holly Lentz, Lentz Productions

## Third Answer:

I think a well-rounded character is more important, as being productive with teams/co-workers is essential. If you have a 4.0 and no extracurriculars, vs. a 3.2 who is active in student government, I'd take the latter.

— Kevin Donlin,  
Guaranteed Résumés

## Fourth Answer:

I always encourage students with good GPAs to list it on their résumé. If

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## Six New Résumé Tricks



In today's high-tech world, computers are changing the way people work. The human resources industry is no exception and a crop of products has been developed that help HR managers sift through the stacks of résumés they receive. What this means for job seekers is that the first person who reads your résumé may not be a person at all, but rather a computer.

Computer programs that are used by companies to find the right candidates are generally called applicant tracking systems. There are many types of systems, all with varying degrees of sophistication. What these systems have in common is the ability to quickly scan résumés and pick out the candidates that should be considered further. These systems work by searching résumés and applications for pre-set keywords that are requirements for the job. They work on paper and electronic résumés and applications. If you mail your paper résumé, it will be fed through a scanner and turned into an electronic file that can then be viewed by the system.

Gerry Crispin and Mark Mehler, human resource consultants and co-authors of "CareerXroads" ([www.careerxroads.com](http://www.careerxroads.com)), a series of directories that list and review career websites, offer these tips to enhance your ability to make it past the first round of electronic screening:

### 1. Start with e-mail; follow up with paper.

The best way to deliver your résumé is via e-mail because at least you know it will get there. A paper résumé can still make a good impression, and you should follow up your e-mail with a paper copy, at least for the jobs you really want. However, try to think like a recruiter—or a computer system—when you send the paper. This means sending a flat copy of your résumé and leaving out the staples. This makes it

easier for a recruiter to run the résumé through the scanner. Use the fax as a last resort, as faxes do not come out clear and are difficult to scan.

### 2. Keep it simple.

Because your résumé will be scanned, it is important to keep your formatting simple. Avoid italics, underlining, fancy or large fonts, and anything else that could be misread. If you are sending an electronic copy of your résumé, create a plain copy of your résumé that leaves out any bold terms or bullets and uses a standard typeface, such as Arial or Times Roman. Plain résumés also work better on company or job search websites that require you to cut and paste your information.

### 3. It's all about key phrases.

The most important thing to remember is the importance of keywords and phrases, which are the tools by which software applications sift through résumés and determine whether to keep or discard them. The trick is tailoring your résumé to answer the company's job description or help wanted ad. Recruiters look for critical skills in the job description as must haves; therefore, make sure your résumé includes those same keywords. Carefully read the description and write your résumé specifically for that position. Every



résumé has to be customized—plain vanilla is no good anymore.

### 4. Conduct a dry run.

After you have created your résumé, e-mail yourself and a friend a copy to see how it appears in the e-mail. This will give you the chance to fix the formatting and edit the document once more before you really hit the "send" button.

### 5. Re-apply.

Most applicant tracking systems allow recruiters to sort résumés by date received, and many recruiters will limit their searches to the most recent résumés. Therefore, it pays to send an updated résumé or edit your profile once a month. If your résumé has been in a company's database for more than 30 days, you can be absolutely sure it will not be seen. If you've posted your résumé to internet or industry-specific job search sites, you should also consider updating it periodically.

### 6. Remember the importance of employee referrals.

Even in a high-tech system, an employee referral is vital. Many systems can pick out résumés or applications that indicate they have been referred by an employee. If you are filling out an online application and have to answer "no" to whether or not you have been referred, hold off on applying. You can increase the likelihood of being called or interviewed by as much as 50 times by having an employee refer you.

Source: Kate Lorenz, Advice Editor for [CareerBuilder.com](http://CareerBuilder.com).

# A Crash Course in Interview Preparation

**E**veryone loves to get this phone call: "This is Jane Doe. I'm calling to see if you would like to come in for a job interview."

Your pulse races: A job interview!

It isn't until the night before the interview that your stomach drops, a feeling of slight dread sets in and you ask yourself, "What am I gonna wear?" "What am I gonna say?"

You've got a case of the pre-interview jitters: A good sign that you haven't spent enough time preparing. Getting ready for an interview should begin at least three days before the interview is scheduled to take place. Here are the top things you should do before the big day arrives.

## The clothes make the job seeker.

Make sure your interview clothes are clean and pressed a few days beforehand. The last thing you want to worry about the night before an interview is pleading with your drycleaner or getting burned by a hot iron. Also, make sure you have a neutral colored umbrella on-hand in case of rain.

## Don't forget your résumés!

Make good-quality copies of your résumé on a nice grade of paper. Take more copies than you will possibly need – just in case. Store the copies in a folder where they will stay clean and

unwrinkled. Organize your portfolio, tear sheets, professional reference lists or any other papers you think your prospective employer would like to see. Make sure your purse or briefcase is stocked with everything else you'll need: a working pen (no pencils), a notebook, breath mints, a comb, an umbrella, and some tissues.

## Practice makes perfect.

Like most things, people get better at interviewing with a little practice. Dedicate one night prior to the interview to a mock "Q and A." You can set this up with a friend or conduct the interview yourself with a list of frequently asked questions and a mirror. Don't panic if, during the actual interview, you are not asked any of the questions you practiced. The point of practicing is to "warm up" to the process of answering questions on the fly.

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## Does Your GPA Really Matter?

they are graduating cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude, that should be included along with membership in their collegiate honor society and academic scholarships.

When an employer sees the fact that a prospective employee right out of college had excellent grades, I believe that either consciously or unconsciously that can play a part in who gets the interview. Most



## Do your homework.

Spend at least two days before the interview researching the company. Take notes. Memorize important facts. A little preparation goes a long way. A couple of hours of researching the company and practicing answers to interview questions can give you that extra bit of confidence you need to ace the interview.

Source: Chris Jones, HotJobs Vice President for Community and Content.

## Business Tip

# Work Style Solutions

- ◆ **Perfectionists:** These folks waste a lot of time rewriting to-do lists and clearing their desks of unfiled papers. They need to chill out and make their workspace more personal.
- ◆ **Collectors:** Collectors can't throw anything away. That means a key organizational aid for them is larger than storage bins.
- ◆ **Bouncing Balls:** Unable to focus on any one assignment, bounc-

ing balls jump from one task to the next and never quite finish any. The most useful organization aid is a to-do list.

- ◆ **Lookouts:** These folks are paranoid that if papers aren't in sight, they'll forget all about them. That's why their desks are piled with paper. Decorative boxes or clear trays where papers can be stored but remain visible will help.

Source: "Office Talk," INFO-FAX Research Department.

people believe that if you got high grades then you are smart and have the skill they need to do the job.

For most employers, I believe that they are more interested in the skills and abilities a person brings to the job rather than the grades they got.

— Linda Wyatt, Career Center, Kansas City Kansas Community College

## Fifth Answer:

It can be a determining factor, but not the only factor, as they do look at other qualifications. In cases of a high number of applicants per position this may increase your chances of making it to the interview. This importance of grade point average varies with different industries.

As to the question of GPA being a determining factor in the starting salary, this will also vary with different industries. It could be used as a selling point during the final interview.

— James Aure, A and A Résumé

Source: © Copyright 1996-2005 CollegeRecruiter.com All rights reserved.

## Occupations with the largest job growth, 2002-2012

“Occupational employment projections to 2012,” published in the *February 2004 Monthly Labor Review*.

[Numbers in thousands of jobs]

Occupation	Employment		Change		Quartile rank by 2002 median annual earnings <sup>1</sup>	Most significant source of postsecondary education or training <sup>2</sup>
	2002	2012	Number	Percent		
Registered nurses	2,284	2,908	623	27	1	Associate degree
Postsecondary teachers	1,581	2,184	603	38	1	Doctoral degree
Retail salespersons	4,076	4,672	596	15	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Customer service representatives	1,894	2,354	460	24	3	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food	1,990	2,444	454	23	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Cashiers, except gaming	3,432	3,886	454	13	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners	2,267	2,681	414	18	4	Short-term on-the-job training
General and operations managers	2,049	2,425	376	18	1	Bachelor's or higher degree, plus work experience
Waiters and waitresses	2,097	2,464	367	18	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	1,375	1,718	343	25	3	Short-term on-the-job training
Truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer	1,767	2,104	337	19	2	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Receptionists and information clerks	1,100	1,425	325	29	3	Short-term on-the-job training
Security guards	995	1,313	317	32	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Office clerks, general	2,991	3,301	310	10	3	Short-term on-the-job training
Teacher assistants	1,277	1,571	294	23	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products	1,459	1,738	279	19	1	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Home health aides	580	859	279	48	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Personal and home care aides	608	854	246	40	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Truck drivers, light or delivery services	1,022	1,259	237	23	3	Short-term on-the-job training
Landscaping and groundskeeping workers	1,074	1,311	237	22	3	Short-term on-the-job training
Elementary school teachers, except special education	1,467	1,690	223	15	2	Bachelor's degree
Medical assistants	365	579	215	59	3	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Maintenance and repair workers, general	1,266	1,472	207	16	2	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Accountants and auditors	1,055	1,261	205	19	1	Bachelor's degree
Computer systems analysts	468	653	184	39	1	Bachelor's degree
Secondary school teachers, except special and vocational education	988	1,167	180	18	1	Bachelor's degree
Computer software engineers, applications	394	573	179	46	1	Bachelor's degree
Management analysts	577	753	176	30	1	Bachelor's or higher degree, plus work experience
Food preparation workers	850	1,022	172	20	4	Short-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	1,798	1,962	163	9	2	Work experience in a related occupation

<sup>1</sup> The quartile rankings of Occupational Employment Statistics annual earnings data are presented in the following categories: 1=very high (\$41,820 and over), 2=high (\$27,500 to \$41,780), 3=low (\$19,710 to \$27,380), and 4=very low (up to \$19,600). The rankings were based on quartiles using one-fourth of total employment to define each quartile. Earnings are for wage and salary workers.

<sup>2</sup> An occupation is placed into one of 11 categories that best describes the education or training needed by most workers to become fully qualified.

NOTE: For more information about the categories, see Chapter III, “Selected Occupational Data, 2002 and Projected 2012” in *Occupational Projections and Training Data*, Bulletin 2572 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2004).

# High-Paying Jobs in the U.S.

“Do what you love and the money will follow” is great in theory, but the truth of the matter is, certain jobs and fields simply pay more. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) National Compensation Survey, published in August 2004, showed that white-collar earnings—which averaged \$21.85 per hour—were the highest among occupational groups. Blue-collar pay averaged \$15.03 per hour, while the hourly pay of service occupations averaged just \$10.40 per hour.

Though many of these occupations require an advanced degree, there are jobs at every education level that pay more than other jobs for workers with similar levels of schooling. Here is a look at the best-paying occupations at varying education levels, according to the Employment Policy Foundation.

## Top-Paying Jobs Overall

The jobs that pay the most require at least a four-year college degree. The nation's 12 top-paying jobs—and the mean annual income reported in 2003 (the most recent year data was available) for each were:

Physicians and surgeons \$147,000

Aircraft pilots	\$133,500
Chief executives	\$116,000
Electrical and electronic engineers	\$112,000
Lawyers and judges	\$99,800
Dentists	\$90,000
Pharmacists	\$85,500
Management analysts	\$84,700
Financial analysts, manager and advisers	\$84,000
Computer and information system managers	\$83,000
Marketing and sales managers	\$80,000
Education administrators	\$80,000

## Top-Paying Jobs That Do Not Require a High School Degree

These jobs tend to require substantial on-the-job training and work experience rather than formal education and schooling:

Bailiffs, correctional officers and jailers	\$36,400
Paralegals and legal assistants	\$36,400
Industrial production managers	\$36,000
Drafters	\$36,000
Construction managers	\$33,600
Electricians	\$31,900

## Top-Paying Jobs for High School Graduates

These occupations emphasize work experience and on-the-job training rather than formal education:

Computer software engineers	\$58,900
Computer/information systems managers	\$56,400
Computer programmers	\$55,000
Network systems and data communications analysts	\$49,000
General and operations managers	\$48,000
Database, network and computer systems administrators	\$48,000

## Top-Paying Jobs for a Two-Year College Degree

The following jobs tend to be technical in nature, emphasizing skills



developed on the job as well as job-specific training and certifications:

Healthcare practitioners	\$66,000
Business analysts	\$58,000
Electrical and electronic engineers	\$57,000
Mechanical engineers	\$56,800
General and operations managers	\$54,000
Computer and information systems managers	\$50,400

A person with a doctoral or professional degree, for example, is expected to earn about \$3 million over the course of his or her working life while a person without a high school diploma is expected to earn less than \$1 million.

The Employment Policy Forum stresses that these numbers are only averages. Individual earnings depend on many factors including geographic location; employer size (average hourly earnings ranged from \$15.06 in organizations employing between one and 99 workers to \$24.09 in those with 2,500 workers or more); industry (workers in goods-producing industries earned \$18.46 per hour vs. those in service-producing industries who earned \$16.44 per hour); and the worker's skills and characteristics.

Source: Employment Policy Foundation and Kate Lorenz, Advice Editor for [CareerBuilder.com](http://CareerBuilder.com).

## Quote for the Lighter Side




**K**eeep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.









Mark Twain (1835-1910)  
Humorist and writer

## Creating a Positive Homework Environment

**D**o you have a child who hates to do homework? If you do, it's important not to get into a power struggle over the issue. A power struggle creates stress in the household and rarely rewards participants with what they want.

So as a parent, what can you do to get your child to turn in those homework assignments on time? Setting up the right environment is key. Here are a few tips on what you need to have in your home:

-  A good dictionary.
-  A thesaurus.
-  A world atlas.

-  A metric ruler and compass.
-  Glue and a stapler.
-  Lots of lined paper.
-  Pens, pencils, colored pencils, a pencil sharpener, and markers.
-  A library card.
-  Internet access.
-  Poster board.
-  A subscription to your local newspaper for reading and studying current issues.

Source: The Clara Abbot Foundation, adapted from the *Chicago Sun-Times*.



Continued from p. 8

## Top 10 Interview Questions

According to a recent survey by [ResumeDoctor.com](http://ResumeDoctor.com), the following are the 10 most frequently asked questions in job interviews:

1. Describe your ideal job/boss.
2. Why are you looking for a job? or Why are you leaving your current position?
3. What unique experiences or qualifications separate you from other candidates?
4. Tell me about yourself.
5. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
6. Describe some of your most important career accomplishments?
7. What are your short-term/long-term goals?
8. Describe a time when you were faced with a challenging situation and how you handled it?
9. What are your salary requirements?
10. Why are you interested in this position? Our company?

Source: [Careerbuilder.com](http://Careerbuilder.com).

## Internship: A Good Way to Land a Full-Time Job

The great thing about working as an intern is that if you do a good job, when a position becomes available you have a tremendous advantage over those not working for the employer.

People hire people they know, especially if they know they can do the job.

Getting an internship may be easy or hard depending on the employer, the industry, the state of the economy, or your qualifications. Some employers have a rigorous selection program with specific requirements. Others have minimum requirements.

Spend as much time on your résumé and cover letter as you would for a full-time job. You still have to get the attention of the hiring manager. Just like for full-time positions, most managers only spend a few seconds scanning a résumé and accompanying cover letter. These must grab their attention right away.

Prepare for the interview in the same way as for a regular job. Be able to answer questions about your qualifications and accomplishments. Be able to explain what you can do in the posi-

tion. Be prepared to ask appropriate questions about the position's duties and what would be expected of you.

Determine whether you can and want to perform the job. You don't want to end up in a situation where you are unhappy.

Treat the internship like you would if you were full-time. Be professional. Ask to be evaluated periodically. Look to improve your performance. Become an asset.

When seeking an internship, take the time to find something you want to do. Look for an employer you really want to work for.

There are different ways to find employers that want interns. Looking at employer websites is one way. Another way is calling a company's human resource department and asking. Sometimes just calling a department manager and discussing what you can do can lead to an interview and a position.

Evaluate your situation to determine whether an internship is a good move for you.

Source: M.B. Owens, Oct. 2004 guest columnist, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, via ProQuest Information and Learning Company; All rights reserved.



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## MAGIC is Here!

The new edition of Virginia's Mid-Atlantic Guide to Information on Careers (MAGIC) is now available. The publication is available in hard copy format and on our website ([www.VaEmploy.Com](http://www.VaEmploy.Com)). Virginia residents may order copies using the order form included in this newsletter, or online at [www.vec.virginia.gov/vecportal/lbrmkt/basket/store.cfm](http://www.vec.virginia.gov/vecportal/lbrmkt/basket/store.cfm). For orders outside of Virginia, a minimal fee is charged. Please contact us at (804) 786-8223 for details.



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# Products Order Form

These products are available at no charge, except where noted.

## Quantity

Also on  
VELMA<sup>‡</sup>

**Bookmark**—the high school graduate versus the high school dropout

**2003 Community Profile**—9-page detailed graphic profiles for each county, city, MSA, and WIA, and for Virginia List Virginia area(s) requested: \_\_\_\_\_

Also on  
VELMA<sup>‡</sup>

**Industry and Occupational Employment Projections: Statewide 2002 – 2012\***

**Job Interview Pocket Résumé**—small tri-fold résumé that fits in a wallet or pocket

NEW!  
Also on  
website

**Virginia's Mid-Atlantic Guide to Information on Careers (MAGIC)**—contains information on job training, education, job-seeking, and careers *Minimal fee charged for orders outside Virginia. Contact us for details.*

Also on  
website

**Virginia Business Resource Directory**—how to start your own business  
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**Virginia Job Outlook 2002 – 2012**—top occupations, annual number of openings, and annual average salaries by educational attainment

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\_\_\_\_\_ **Education Pays ...**

Available only  
on VELMA<sup>‡</sup>

**Occupational Wage Data Report: 2004\***

Statewide, Virginia

Local Workforce Investment Areas

Virginia Metropolitan Wage Data (MSAs)

Regional Wage Data

\* Reference materials only.

<sup>‡</sup> For information on VELMA, see **People are asking**, page 8.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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## People are asking ... **What is VELMA?**

VELMA is an in-depth database of employment and industry information designed to assist the public with a wide range of needs from personal career planning to business location planning. It is Virginia's official information guide for job seekers, employers, and labor market analysts. This easy-to-use interactive website is endowed with an array of employment and unemployment data, area demographics, industry and occupational wage data, current economic indicators, and more.

For additional information and to access this data, please visit <http://velma.virtuallmi.com>.

Source: The Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information Services Division.

## Internship: A Good Way to Land a Full-Time Job

**G**aining an advantage over the competition is important in business. It is also important in obtaining a job. Whether you're looking for your first job or seeking a new employer, working as an intern can help you land a spot with your company of choice.



Internships vary widely by industry and employer. They are found in large and small private businesses, non-profit organizations and government agencies. They may be for the summer or anytime during the year. Some are paid and some are unpaid. Almost every industry has internships at some level. Often, they are an integral part of the work force.

Levels of responsibility vary depending on the needs of the employer. Variables and dynamics of the employer's work force may affect the demands placed on its interns.

**Virginia Employment Commission**



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Employers are aware of the advantages of using interns. It reduces the need and expense of recruiting.



Many managers see internships as one way to develop employees for the future. At the very minimum, it is a way to have talented people work for them inexpensively.

Managers don't like to take risks. By hiring people who are familiar, they reduce the chances of making a mistake.

Working with an employee over a period of weeks or months allows a manager to observe performance, work habits, and attitude.

Internships can help you gain experience with an employer that may hire you full-time after you become a real asset. It is a way to continue training and education without having to pay. Even if an employer does not eventually hire you, valuable experience should be gained that can be applied elsewhere.

Continued on p. 6